

Oral Questions

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, the New Democratic Party and the people of Canada are not interested in being morose. We simply want some truth from the Government of Canada; that is all.

REQUEST THAT GOVERNMENT CHANGE ECONOMIC PROGRAM

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, businessmen, labour movements, women and senior citizens have opposed the program now in B.C. Every group in the B.C. community that has seen the results of the Conservative Government's national economic policy in action see it as not working. Therefore, why is the Prime Minister, who promised positive change, not prepared to look at the evidence and change his program now?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, why would the Hon. Member indulge in such specious reasoning when he knows full well that there is no resemblance between the program undertaken at a given time in British Columbia and the forward looking, positive, private sector oriented program now?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Mulroney: Why is he so gloomy?

Mr. Broadbent: You should go on the stage.

Mr. Mulroney: The Canadian people did not give him a mandate; they gave him a reprieve on September 4.

There is a mandate for change based on co-operative action with all of the players in our economy. It is based as well on the belief that the private sector, enhanced by thoughtful government action, can create the hundreds of thousands of jobs that we need. That is what we are going to do. We hope that you will co-operate in doing it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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SOCIAL SECURITY

PROPOSED REVIEW

Hon. Douglas C. Frith (Sudbury): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Prime Minister. This summer, during his campaign, he promised the Canadian public that universality was "a sacred trust that would not be tampered with". Yet, within six weeks of assuming office, he broke that promise.

In last Friday's press conference the Prime Minister said that only bank presidents, all nine of them, should expect to have some cut in their family allowance cheques. However, in his own budget which was tabled here last Thursday evening, it states that Canadian families earning between \$20,000 and

\$30,000 a year, and that is the average Inco worker, can expect cuts in benefits to their children, and to their grandparent's pension cheques. Will the Prime Minister confirm to the House that average Canadian families earning between \$20,000 and \$30,000 a year will be subject to this review of social security?

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): Mr. Speaker, I think it would be helpful if the Hon. Member could give us the page and read it out, because there were at least three serious, no doubt inadvertent, misstatements of fact in his question. The fact of the matter is that the Government has not tampered with universality and has not changed it.

Mr. Tobin: Not yet.

Mr. Gagliano: What happened to the sacred trust?

Mr. Mulroney: We have not even considered going so far as the finance critic of the Liberal Party did. When he was running for the leadership of that Party he asked that they all be scrapped. So there should not be any great declarations of ideological purity coming from the other side. All we are trying to do is ask, in what we think is a mature way, without affecting the universal nature of medical care and without at any time having a means test, whether we cannot, as a mature society, explore ways in which we can put more dollars into the hands of those underprivileged in our society who need them most. That is the question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

OPERATION OF TAX SYSTEM

Hon. Douglas C. Frith (Sudbury): Mr. Speaker, none of us in this Chamber would be opposed to review in that manner.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Frith: Why has the Government chosen to put the burden on the backs of the families of this country who earn between \$20,000 and \$30,000 a year, rather than on the banks and the people whom we have all talked about, who earn over \$50,000 a year and have not paid their fair share of taxes? That is the question I would like the Prime Minister to answer.

Right Hon. Brian Mulroney (Prime Minister): As I think the hon. gentleman knows, the tax system operates in such a way that those in higher brackets, \$20,000, \$30,000, \$40,000, receive less because of the operations of the tax system in many ways. However, in some programs they receive more than people who earn under \$10,000. We are trying to get more money into the hands of people in this country who need it. That is the object of the exercise. I was delighted to see that the Hon. Member, speaking on behalf of all his colleagues, joins in this process of review.